

ADVOCATES

E-Tech (Education and Technology)

Submitted by Mary Brown, SC Foster Parent 's Association

Children in out-of-home care face special challenges related to education achievement due to a number of factors, including frequent moves, no parent figure to advocate for them, and the lack of coordination between social service agencies and the school system (Children's Defense Fund, 2006).

It has been well documented (Avery & Freundlich, 2003) that youth aging out of foster care are at high risk for experiencing an array of poor outcomes including economic instability, educational disadvantage, criminal activity, victimization, homelessness, health problems, substance abuse, and early parenting. Their lack of educational achievement is an underlying contributor to this array of poor outcomes (McNaught, 2004).

E-Tech (Education and Technology) is a collaborative project of the South Carolina Foster Parent Association (SCFPA), the South Carolina Department of Social Services, and The Center for Child and Family Studies.

The purpose of E-Tech is to address the educational needs and issues of South Carolina's children and youth in out-of-home care. E-Tech is working with various agencies that are involved in providing or monitoring educational services to identify and address service gaps and establish guidelines for addressing educational needs of children and youth in out-of-home care. In addition, E-Tech strives to provide foster parents with the knowledge base and resources to better help these children and youth reach their full educational potential.

E-Tech's philosophy is that every child receiving foster care services should have access to a computer within his/her home environment. E-Tech, through the SCFPA, will provide new computers to eligible foster parents based on priority of need and the limitations of the annual budget.

The pilot counties are **ALLENDALE, BAMBERG, BARNWELL, CHESTERFIELD, DILLON, JASPER, LEE, MARION, MARLBORO, and WILLIAMSBURG.**

A selected group of foster parents have participated in a Training of Trainer sessions (TOT) and will deliver Educational Success information at local foster parent association meetings. Two Educational Success training topics are planned for the first year: Strategies to Encourage Education Success for Children Receiving Foster Care Services and Strategies for Effectively Working with the School System.

At the state level, an Education Subcommittee has been formed to address educational issues for children and youth in out-of-home care. Information and resources learned about through the Education Subcommittee's work will be disseminated locally through brochures, posters, the SCFPA, and other methods. Training sessions can be conducted for local DSS staff, school district staff, and community resource groups as needed. GOALL has been asked to develop these materials.

For additional information contact Mary Brown at 1-800-475-7650 or visit their website at <http://www.scfpa.com>

**SOUTH CAROLINA
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
Division of Foster
Care Review**
Mark Sanford, Governor
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THE PURPOSE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION (SCFPA)

To bring together foster parents, agency representatives and community people who wish to improve the foster care system and enhance the lives of all children and their families.

To promote mutual coordination, cooperation and communication among foster parents, foster parent associations, child care agencies and other advocates.

To encourage the recruitment and retention of foster parents.

To inform membership and the general public of current information pertaining to the well-being of all children and in particular children needing foster care placement.

Children's Foster Care Review Board Mission Statement

The Foster Care Review Program provides an external system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Division utilizes panels of community volunteers to promote safe, permanent homes for children in foster care in a timely manner and to increase public awareness regarding the impact of child abuse and neglect.

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Directly Speaking ... Details From Denise

By Denise Barker, Division Director

"Attempt the impossible in order to improve your work." Bette Davis

When I appeared before our House Ways and Means subcommittee several weeks ago, they asked me a question about the improbability of being able to achieve our vision – a safe, permanent home for every child. Is achieving that vision impossible? What signs tell us we are making progress toward that vision? My response was that if not for the vision, no progress would have been made. We would not have an improved foster care system, more children moving into adoption than ever before or stronger community volunteers working hard to be strong advocates for the children they review. An impossible vision? No. A vision worth pursuing? No doubt about it! Too many children and families are counting on us – we cannot give up now.

Planning the work that must be done to achieve our vision filled the fall months and continues into 2007. Our State Board of Directors kicked us off with a strategic planning session in October, followed by Chairperson Training the first week in January. We had more participation by local Board chairs and vice-chairs than we

have ever had in the past. All participants seemed enthusiastic and ready to get back to their boards and communities and start tackling the challenges posed by the State Board. Staff at all levels also participated in their own retreats in order to understand their individual roles in achieving the State Board's goals and objectives. We are ready for 2007!

Effective January 1, 2007, four new local Review Boards join our "family". These additions make us busier than we have ever been! More volunteers equal more work for staff, but I also like to think that these additional board members are each new voices for our children. We are excited about our new members and look forward to having their help in achieving that "impossible" vision! One thing we know for sure – it will never happen if we all aren't doing our part to make it happen.

Welcome, 2007 – this is going to be an exciting year. By speaking up and speaking out for our kids, **you** are making a difference – a difference that leads directly to our vision.

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Strictly by the Board News from the State Board of Directors

By **Vernon McCurry**, Chairperson, State Board of Directors

The State Board was very pleased to see so many of you at our Chairperson Training on January 8th. We especially enjoyed the time spent in the afternoon meeting with those of you representing the local boards assigned to each of us. Your thoughts and concerns provide valuable insight to the State Board as we work to achieve the strategic goals set out for the agency.

I hope you all have the date for our Annual Conference, April 20, 2007 on your calendars. Between now and then, State Board members will maintain contact with board chairpersons by telephone or through personal visits to our assigned local boards. This contact keeps us in touch with you and your issues – all of which give us a better picture of the way our agency is functioning statewide. If you don't hear from us, or if you have a particular question, please feel free to contact us at any time. We appreciate your candor and your cooperation.

As always, I thank you all again for the time and commitment you bring to this program. Without you, there would be no external system of accountability for children in foster care in South Carolina.



State Board Members

Vernon McCurry, Member at-Large, Chairperson (Local Review Board 13C)

Vacant, 1st Congressional District

Jo Hecker, 2nd Congressional District (Local Review Board 5B)

Anne Thayer, 3rd Congressional District (Local Review Board 10B)

Dot Bailey, 4th Congressional District (Local Review Board 13C)

Martha ("Sissy") Brock, 5th Congressional District (Local Review Board 7B)

Kenneth Mance, 6th Congressional District (Local Review Board 3A)

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A REVIEW BOARD VOLUNTEER?

- ◆ You need to be at least 18 years of age and able to commit to spending one day per month reviewing cases. You will be given an opportunity to work with others in the child welfare system to bring about positive change for foster children.
- ◆ Each review board member is appointed by the Governor, upon the recommendation of legislative delegations, and is required to reside in the judicial district of the review board.
- ◆ For more information, call the Governor's Office Foster Care Review Program at 803-734-0480, or contact your local legislative delegation.

Kudos!!! Congrats!!! Bravo!!! Well Done!!!



In August 2006, *Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina* honored Denise Barker as one of the first ever recipients of the BLOCK Award. The BLOCK award honors individuals who are dedicated to **Building Lives Of Carolina's Kids**.

At their meeting held July 21, 2006, the State Board of Directors confirmed the winners for the 2006 Review Board and Review Board Member of the Year. Drum roll . . . and the winners are:

Review Board Member: Ron Rossi, Review Board 13C, Greenville
 Review Board(s): Review Board 13B and Review Board 13C, Greenville

This year is an upstate sweep! Congratulations to our winners!

Review Boards 5D, 13A and 15B had perfect attendance at last fall's regional training (pictures below)! An excellent pat on the back to Coordinators Millie Qualls, Anne Ochylski, and Mark

Collins. We had planned to recognize them for it, but in two of the groups, they made the announcement and beat us to the punch. Needless to say, they are proud (and they should be).



Foster Facts: Faces of Foster Care

By Lisa S. Vosburgh, Research/Data Manager

Each May is recognized as Foster Care Month. According to fostercaremonth.org, the following data describe the "faces of foster care" nationally:

- *518,000 children and youth in foster care
- *58% are children of color
- *19% have been in care three or more years
- *Nearly half are over the age of 10
- *53% are male
- *Children average of 2.5 different placements while in foster care

Nationally an estimated 20,000 youth "age out" of the foster care system annually. Foster care alumni studies report that for youth leaving care: 54% earned a high school diploma; 2% obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher; 84% became a parent; 51% were unemployed; and 30% were receiving public assistance.

In comparison, South Carolina ranks above the national average in all but one category. Of the 4,853 children in foster care in South Carolina, 60% are over the age of 10; 59% are children of color; 51% are male; 24% have been in care three or more years; and the average number of placements is four. In 2005, 23% of children leaving foster care were emancipated, "aging out" of the system.

The face of youth leaving foster care by emancipation is sobering. The average time spent in the foster care system for this population is 5.25 years (over 30% of the children spent 6 or more years in foster care); they average 6.7 placements; and 58% leave care from a therapeutic placement. While outcome data for South Carolina foster care alumni is not readily available, the [2005 Kids Count Data Book](#) (state profiles of child well-being, The Annie E. Casey Foundation) reports that South Carolina ranks 45th among states in over-all child well-being (based on indicators impacting health, adequacy of income, and educational attainment).

Without adequate support and services, youth that "age out" of foster care are most vulnerable to homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, compromised physical and mental health, poor educational status, poverty, and substance abuse. However, recent studies suggest that a permanent connection to just one nurturing adult (as in adoption and foster parenting) can shape brighter futures for youth by offering a safe and stable environment, and providing guidance support.

Review Board Round-up

By Foster Care Review Board Coordinators

- ◆ **Review Board 1A:** Eleanor Bilton served Review Board 1A faithfully from 1977 until her resignation in December 2006. Board Members hosted a reception in honor of her many years of volunteer service. Anne Williamson, Orangeburg DSS, presented Mrs. Bilton with a gift from their staff (pictured right). Mrs. Bilton completed her service by presenting contributions for children in foster care from the Holly Hill United Methodist Church. Review Board staff thanks Mrs. Bilton for 29 years of volunteer service! *Robin Campbell*



- ◆ **Review Board 3B:** Board members showed their appreciation to DSS staff by hosting a Christmas drop-in at the scheduled December review. Board members brought various Christmas goodies for the annual event. *Michelle Crowder*
- ◆ **Review Board 4A:** Rick Forman coordinated with members of his church congregation to provide school supplies and book bags for all children in foster care in Marlboro county. In addition, members of his congregation have committed to a monthly project for children in foster care. Rick feels strongly that his calling as a minister has brought him to be involved in the foster care system; he is also a foster parent. The staff of Marlboro County expressed their appreciation to Rick for his commitment and services to the foster children in Marlboro county. *Stephen Clyburn*
- ◆ **Review Board 7A:** In September Board Member June Bond traveled to Washington, DC to accept the "Adoption Angel" award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. The Coalition is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about orphans and foster children around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes; and to eliminating barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right of a family. The Angels in Adoption program is its signature public awareness program, which provides an opportunity for all members of Congress to honor the good work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans. *Stephanie Spink*
- ◆ **Review Boards 10B and 10C:** Board members showed their appreciation to DSS staff by hosting Christmas drop-ins at the scheduled December reviews.

Board members brought various Christmas goodies for the annual event. Ed Zielinski, RB 10C, had his friends at Johnny's Body Shop in Anderson collect over \$600 in change, surpassing the \$400 raised last year. This year they used the funds to purchase gift cards for children in foster care in Anderson. Because of their generosity, foster children in Anderson county had another great Christmas. *Michelle Crowder*

- ◆ **Review Board 13B and 13C:** Excitement and enthusiasm filled the Shoe Carnival as foster children, parents, DSS case workers, and Review Board members participated in the second annual shoe night for foster children. (pictured below). The Greenville County Foster Parent's Association raised \$3,375 to provide new shoes for 118 foster children. Amber Feusse, President, and Beth Humphries, Vice-President, provided the leadership in raising funds for this event. DSS case workers Melanie Asbell, Katy Barringer, Sarah Brown, and Jacqui Lane were present to assist children with shoe selection. Ron Rossi, RB 13B, and his wife Pat, Dot Bailey, RB 13C and State Board Member, and Vernon McCurry, RB 13C and State Board Member, provided encouragement and support. *Vernon McCurry, RB 13C and State Board Member*



- ◆ **Review Board 13B:** In November the BI-LO Charity Classic Gold Tournament awarded the Greenville County Foster Parent Association (GCFPA) with \$8,500. The money will fund extracurricular activities for foster children in Greenville and Pickens counties. Beth Humphries, GCFPA Treasurer, writes "We offer our many thanks to BI-LO's commitment to the Greenville County Foster Parent Association and our community and are very proud of our partnership with BI-LO and their generous support of our organization." *Ron Rossi, RB 13B*
- ◆ **Review Board 15C:** Board Members donated money and clothing to Fostering Hope for foster children beginning school in August. The money was used to purchase shoes for back to school. *Mark Collins*



Foster Care Review News and Views: CHANGE: It's Not a Four Letter Word

By Beth Green, Program Director

Some of you have contacted us in recent months regarding the 2007 caseload changes and board assignments for certain Review Board Coordinators. I wanted to take this opportunity to explain the reasons for the change and address your concerns.

We are pleased that so many of you view your Coordinator as critical to the effective functioning of your Board. This reinforces what we already know — that the Review Board Coordinators are doing a great job working with you and your counties. While nothing would please us more than to keep all of our approximately 200 volunteers happy, our reality is that four new Review Boards and another Coordinator position cannot be added without some changes being made.

Four new Boards have been created in the judicial circuits where the existing review boards were overburdened by large numbers of children needing review and the length of the review days. The newly created boards are: 16B (York), 7C (Spartanburg), 9F (Charleston) and 13D (Greenville). Had we not made any changes, the four new boards would have had to be assigned to the new Coordinator hired in December 2006. That would hardly be fair to the new board members or our new employee.

For the larger county assignments, we felt that there would be a benefit to several Coordinators sharing the responsibility. Such a structure would provide the opportunity for partnering, teamwork and provide an internal system of checks and balance. We also wanted the newly created boards to have seasoned Coordinators supporting their development.

The good news is that we have ten competent and professional Review Board Coordinators. While each Coordinator has his or her own style and personality, the guidance and support provided to local review boards should be relatively consistent. Change in staff should have little impact on how you operate as a board. We feel strongly that your continuity as a community-based board is much more important than ours as support staff.

Decisions regarding change are never easy or made lightly, as there are always multiple factors to consider. I challenge you to view the change as an opportunity for growth and progress as you continue to strive for permanent homes for the children in your community. Thank you in advance for your understanding and support. Know that we are always available if you have any questions or concerns.

Thoughts to the Judge

By Kristen, age 12

Childhood is learning to jump as high as you and can not let your feet shake the floor. Childhood is drawing your dreams. Childhood is learning that taking your first grade teacher's candy bar is stealing.

But judge, childhood is also letting your voice be heard; whether you are screaming at your sister because your sister called you "stupid" or telling a judge like your high and mightiness what you need to say.

But how can I do that if you don't even want to hear what I, one insignificant twelve-year old have to say? All I want for my birthday is a voice. And as I mature, I want to know one thing: How old do I have to be? Sixteen? Eighteen? Twenty-one? Elementary school? Junior high? High school? College? Old and wrinkled, my bones turning to dust as I crochet in my old rocking chair in the corner?

By Antoinette, Age 14

Let me stay in a home with loving parents that care for me. I want to be somewhere where I can live my life as a child, in a better situation. Can you find a home that is truly good and where the people will help me? You are the one who makes the decisions, and I need to be heard so people may understand how I feel and what I need. Listen to me, since no one else will, and try to understand where I'm coming from. Maybe I am a child, but I'm not dumb; I know right from wrong, I need to know that you will make the right decisions for me, so that I can live life the way it's supposed to be.

Committed to Kids! Smiling New Faces

New Review Board Members: Three new local review board members, and one staff member attended orientation on September 26, 2006. Please welcome: **Jennifer Howard-Kelly**, Board 3A, Clarendon; **Andrea H. Glenn**, Board 9A, Charleston; **Rick A. Kirby**, Board 10B, Anderson; and **Rochelle Green**, RB Coordinator .

Orientation training is mandatory for all incoming board members and is offered at least four times each year. If you have review board members who have not completed this training, please encourage their attendance. Volunteer GALs and Guardian Ad Litem staff are welcome to attend; please call to reserve a space.

The next New Member Orientation will be February 26, 2007.



Review Board Staff News and Updates:

We are excited to welcome **Elizabeth Codega**. Elizabeth joined our staff on December 4th and will be the Coordinator for the 12A, 14A, 15B and 15C Review Boards. Elizabeth comes to us from Alabama where she was a program director for a local non-profit organization. Her educational background includes an undergraduate degree from USC and an MSW from the University of Alabama. Elizabeth also participated in a graduate fellowship in Washington, DC during her MSW studies. Elizabeth recently moved back to Columbia with her husband and is excited to be back in South Carolina.

We welcomed **Rochelle Renee Green** to our staff on September 5th. Rochelle is a graduate of Columbia College and is a Masters of Social Work candidate at USC. She is the Coordinator for Boards 3A, 4A, 5E, 11B, and 15A.

Shannon Wiley, our new staff attorney, earned a BA in English from the University of South Carolina, a Master's in Women's Studies from the University of Alabama, and a J.D. from William and Mary School of Law. During law school, Shannon served on the editorial board for the William and Mary Law Review. After law school, Shannon spent two and half years as Assistant Solicitor for the Sixteenth Circuit (Union) where she handled a general sessions and juvenile docket. Shannon has worked as an attorney with the Richland County Department of Social Services handling abuse and neglect cases since June 2005. At DSS, she has handled everything from EPC hearings to TPR hearings.

Legal Lines: Legislative and Case Law Updates

By Shannon Wiley, Staff Attorney

Legislative Preview

The 2007-2008 Session of the South Carolina State Legislature is now underway, and several bills have been introduced that contain provisions that could impact children in foster care.

- ◆ Representative Bob Leach (Greenville County) has introduced two bills that would have a positive impact on children in foster care. House Bill 3077 would establish the Adoption Procedures Study Committee for the purpose of improving the efficiency of the adoptions process in South Carolina and achieving permanency for children in a timely manner. The second bill, House Bill 3069, relates to methamphetamines. The bill expands the definition of child abuse and neglect to include exposing a child to methamphetamine use and adds it as a ground for TPR. The bill would also allow the family court to forego reasonable efforts for reunification if the child was knowingly exposed to methamphetamines.
- ◆ Representative Doug Smith (Spartanburg County) has introduced House Bill 3073, which would move the administration of Managed Treatment Services (MTS) to the Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed children. MTS is currently administered by the Department of Social Services.
- ◆ Representative Mac Toole (Lexington County) has introduced House Bill 3172, which would allow an adoptee over the age of twenty-one to access his or her birth records, unless the birth parent has filed a notarized form to prohibit their release.
- ◆ Senator Jim Ritchie (Greenville, Spartanburg, and Union Counties) has introduced Senate Bill 196, which would enact the South Carolina Family Court Hearing Officer Act. This bill would allow retired judges to act as hearing officers in Department of Social Services cases.
- ◆ Senator Glenn McConnell (Charleston County) and others have introduced Senate Bill 151 which would create the South Carolina Child Abuse and Neglect Medical Response System. This system would coordinate medical information resources to state agencies and child advocacy centers.

The full text of these bills is available on-line at <http://www.scstatehouse.net> or you may email or call the Foster Care Review Board State Office and we will provide you with copies.

**South Carolina Governor's Office
Division of Foster Care Review**

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Review Board Calendar

President's Day	Feb 19	State Office Closed
Foster Care Review New Member Orientation	Mon Feb 26	10:00 am Columbia, SC
Foster Care Review New Member Orientation	Mon Mar 26	10:00 am Columbia, SC
State Board of Directors	Fri Mar 30	12:00 noon Columbia, SC
Foster Care Review Board Annual Conference	Fri April 20	Columbia, SC
Confederate Memorial Day	May 10	State Office Closed
Foster Care Review New Member Orientation	Mon May 14	10:00 am Columbia, SC
National Memorial Day	Mon May 28	State Office Closed
Independence Day	July 4	State Office Closed
State Board of Directors	Fri July 20	12:00 noon Columbia, SC
Foster Care Review New Member Orientation	Mon Aug 27	10:00 am Columbia, SC
Labor Day	Sept 3	State Office Closed

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Anyone wishing to submit an article should contact *Advocates* editor Lisa Vosburgh. Call 803-734-0474, or send an e-mail to lvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov.

The publisher reserves the right to make the final determination as to the content of each issue. Articles submitted are subject to editing and are not guaranteed inclusion.

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